District Review Report

School District No. 6 (Rocky Mountain)

April 25 - 28, 2004

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Jacquie Taylor, Superintendent, School District No. 33 (Chilliwack)

District Review Report

2003/2004

District Name:	Rocky Mountain
District Number:	6
Superintendent:	Bendina Miller
Date of Visit:	April 25-28, 2004
Team Chair:	Jacquie Taylor, Superintendent, SD 33 (Chilliwack)
Team Members:	Timma Blain, Curriculum & Instruction Administrator, SD 57 (Prince George) Elyn Dobbs, Parent, SD 39 (Vancouver) Colleen Larson, Teacher, SD 22 (Vernon) Ross Spina, Director of Secondary Education, SD 73 (Kamloops/Thompson) Renee Wentland, Education Officer, Ministry of Education

Context

School District No. 6 (Rocky Mountain) extends from Field in the Yoho Park to Kimberley, with a district population of over 24,000 people.

Over the past 6 years enrolment in School District No. 6 has declined by 837 students from 4,512 to the current enrolment of 3,675 FTE. The projection is for continued decline.

Effective September 2002 the District closed seven schools, moved students from a stand-alone French Immersion primary school to a dual track French Immersion/neighborhood school, reconfigured the elementary schools in Golden to a primary K - 3 school and an intermediate Grade 4 - 7 school. In addition, an eighth school continues to be under year-to-year consideration for closure.

Four hundred and fifty-nine or 12% of the District's 3,675 FTE students are of Aboriginal ancestry. Of the 459 Aboriginal students, 54.5 or 11.8% are from the Columbia Lake and Shuswap Bands.

Summary of Process

The major purpose of the District Review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the District, the Ministry of Education and the public regarding the District's work in improving student achievement. The specific purposes of the review are to:

- Review school district and school achievement data;
- Review the School District accountability contract and school plans to improve student achievement;
- Determine the capacity of the School District to support schools in improving student achievement;

- Make recommendations to the School District and to the Minister about improving student achievement; and
- Identify promising practices that might assist other school districts and schools in their plans to improve student achievement.

In addressing these objectives, the Review Team reviewed the District's accountability contract, Ministry data related to the District, and individual school success plans.

At the outset of the review, the Team enjoyed an informal dinner meeting with district partner representatives. At the introductory session, the Review Team met with senior district staff, Board representatives, District level support staff, DPAC representatives and principals and teachers. The Review Team was provided with an overview of School District No. 6 Directions, the main goals of the District accountability contract and with highlights of a number of district and school programs and initiatives.

Two members of the review team met with four representatives of the District Parent Advisory Council.

The Team reviewed school success plans and the 10 Points of Inquiry at Alexander Park and Eileen Madson Primary schools; Blarchmont, Edgewater, Martin Morigeau, Marysville and Nicholson Elementary schools; Lady Grey Intermediate school, Golden and Selkirk Secondary schools; Open Doors Alternate school, McKim Middle school, Kimberley Youth Program, Learning@Home, and Sports School.

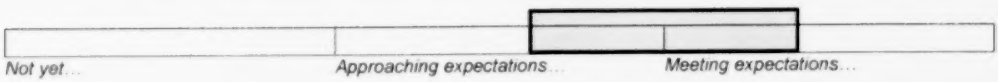
The review meeting at each school included School Planning Council representatives and members of the school community.

At the conclusion of the review visit, the Team met with District's staff, Board and other representatives, to present a draft of the Review Report.

The Team appreciated the warm and positive reception provided through out the District during the review process. School District No. 6 demonstrates a culture of caring, respect and positive working relationships.

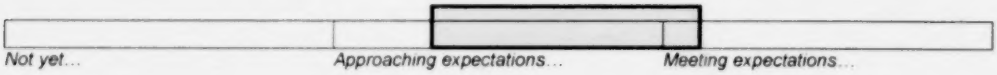
Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. *Goals:*
   Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals for improving achievement for all students.



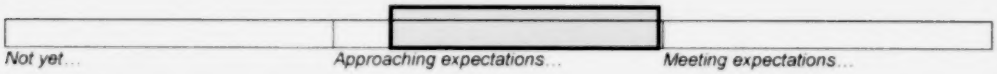
- District goals and goals in most schools focus on student achievement.
- The District Accountability Contract has a focus on Aboriginal student achievement; however, this focus is not clear in School Success Plans.

2. *Rationale:*
Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, **based on evidence**, for the selection of their student achievement goals.



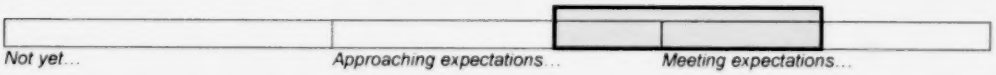
- Schools are in the process of developing rationales based on evidence from multiple sources of data.
- In some schools there was not a clear link between the goal and evidence to support the goal.

3. *Data:*
Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. The analysis of this evidence informs the selection of the district goals and is used to monitor progress.



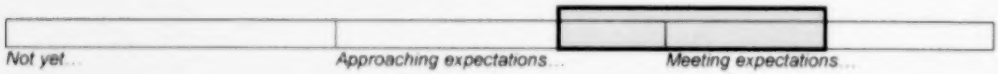
- The District and most schools can provide evidence of data collection.
- Some schools utilize multiple sources of data to monitor progress toward performance targets.
- There is growing evidence of analysis, interpretation and reporting of data.

4. *Strategies:*
Improving districts and schools have well-organized, focused improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



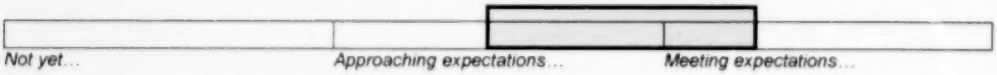
- The District plays a key role in helping schools implement research-based strategies.
- Some schools are actively engaged in examining and using research-based strategies and innovative practices.
- Many schools appear to use a collaborative process to select and implement strategies.

5. *Structures:*
Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organizations – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



- The District has made a significant commitment to allocate resources to support district and school-level goals through their model of staff development.
- The District takes a proactive approach to coordinating the servic es of Aboriginal Education Support Workers.
- Many administrators are finding creative ways to encourage teacher collaboration and participation in professional develop m ent activities.
- A few schools have made structural changes to school orga nization in support of strategies leading to goa l attainment.

6. *Results:*
Improving districts and schools get improved results – at the classroom, school and district levels.

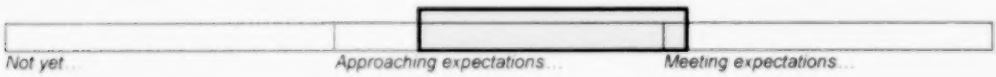


- Many schools are developing processes for monitoring results.
- Many schools use data; some schools use multiple sources of data to report results.
- Many schools are beginning to use authentic m easures such as the Perform ance Standards.

7. *Communication:*
Improving districts and schools are involved in continuous di alogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being m ade in specific areas of focus.

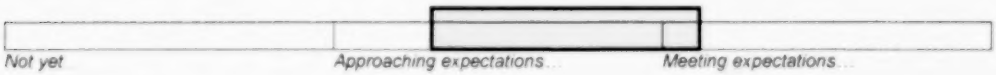
- Schools have welcoming environments which foster communication.
- Many schools use news letters, PAC meetings and informal conversations for communicating student achievem ent.
- Some schools are communicating progress toward goal attainment.
- Some schools have innovative approaches to c ommunicating with their communities.
- The District makes a strong effort to com municate effectively with all partner groups despite the geographic challenges.

8. *Teamwork – District and School Coherence*:
Improving districts and schools have an interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and school district directions are both valued.



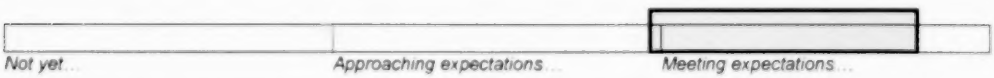
- The District acknowledges and honours the work of individual schools in the development of the District Accountability Contract; the connections between the District accountability contract and school success plans are less clear.
- There is alignment between school goals and ongoing district professional development.
- The District is working on a process of linking goals, objectives and strategies.

9. *Teamwork – District and Parent Involvement*:
Improving districts and schools work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.



- The District recognizes and supports the role of the DPAC.
- In some schools parents are engaged in the development and monitoring of school plans.
- In a few schools parents are collaborating with school staff in planning and implementing strategies in support of student achievement goals.
- Many School Planning Councils are looking forward to greater participation in the planning cycle.
- The SPCs and PACs acknowledge the staff development provided by the School District and the DPAC to develop understanding of roles and responsibilities.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork*:
Leaders in improving districts and schools have a clear vision for, and commitment, to improving achievement for all students. Leadership at all levels, in all roles, is encouraged and systematically developed in a collaborative learning community with a focus on improving student achievement.



- The Board has developed and continues to communicate a long-term vision and directions for the District.
- The District models shared leadership, collegiality and the importance of positive working relationships.
- Leadership is initiated throughout the school community.

(*continued*)

- In many schools leadership capacity is being developed by providing opportunities for staff collaboration focused on student achievement.
- Despite major challenges, the District continues to maintain a clear focus on student achievement.

Strengths

The team made the following observations of particular strengths related to student achievement:

- People are valued in School District No. 6.
- The School District is successfully developing one culture focused on a united purpose.
- Trustees and senior management have put significant effort into developing positive working relationships.
- School-based staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to students.
- The District has a model of sustained staff development to achieve long-term goals.
- The District encourages principals and teachers to participate jointly in staff development.
- The District operations staff supports student achievement by maintaining facilities at a high standard.
- The District is committed to improving the success of Aboriginal students.
- Partnerships are in place with public agencies and business; the District continues to seek opportunities to expand these initiatives.
- The District recognizes the importance of DPAC and supports ongoing development.

Promising Practices

The team identified the following school district and school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus:

- District-wide support of required training for Special Education Assistants (ie Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders)
- School-wide inter-departmental staff involvement in the District Write at the secondary school level
- An organized approach to strengthen Principles of Math 12 success (ie extra time allotment within the timetable)
- Common math time and cross-grade grouping for instruction at intermediate level
- Innovative options to meet individual student needs (such as Sports School)
- District-supported "Share the Knowledge Grants" for staff action research and professional development
- Interagency co-operative funding agreement (between the school district, Ministry of Children and Family Development, and Interior Health Authority) to support full-time preschool SLP services over 2 years

(*Promising Practices continued*)

- Planned preschool within a primary school facility (Fall 2004)
- The "BLAST In the Rockies" Conference (BLAST – Being a Leader and Succeeding Together) for students in grades 6 to 11, initiated and organized by students enrolled in district developed leadership courses
- The One to One reading program, involving parents and other community volunteers who provide guided reading practice to students, sponsored by the Columbia Basin Literacy Alliance

Recommendations

The Team respectfully suggests recommendations in the following areas:

Planning Process

- Consider implementing a district partner team to review and analyze district data and school success plans to recommend goals, strategies and targets for the district accountability contract.
- Consider reviewing and revising the school success plan template (the OPTS program).
- Continue to thoughtfully and systematically use multiple data sources for setting goals and monitoring student progress at school and district levels (from provincial, district, school and classroom sources).

District Goals

- Consider reporting annually on Aboriginal student achievement.
- Consider clarifying the connection between the District Accountability Contract objectives for Aboriginal students and school-level strategies for student achievement.

Communication & Teamwork

- Continue to develop the leadership skills of principals and vice principals.
- Continue to promote and support the role of the DPAC.
- Continue to provide district support for SPC development.
- Continue to foster a district culture and communication strategies focused on a united purpose.